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4498th meeting

Wednesday, 27 March 2002, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Kolby	(Norway)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	Colombia	Mr. Rivas
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Guinea	Mr. Boubacar Diallo
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Mauritius	Mr. Gokool
	Mexico	Ms. Lajous
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999).

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02-30603 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Spain and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Nebojša Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of the Yugoslav constituent Republic of Serbia and President of the Coordination Centre of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Čović (Yugoslavia) took a seat at the Council table and Mr. Arias (Spain) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Hédi Annabi, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Annabi to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Hédi Annabi, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. After the briefing, I shall open the floor to members.

I now give the floor to Mr. Annabi.

Mr. Annabi: I am pleased to provide an update on developments in Kosovo since Council members were last briefed, on 25 February.

This month has been a busy one for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), with progress made on the priority issues outlined to the Council during the last briefing. The most notable achievements were the formation of a Government after several months of deadlock and the transfer to Kosovo yesterday of the remaining known Kosovo Albanian prisoners held in Serbian jails.

UNMIK's efforts to foster political agreement between the three major Kosovo Albanian parties culminated on 28 February in an agreement to form a coalition Government headed by Mr. Bajram Rexhepi of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK). The same agreement put forward Mr. Ibrahim Rugova of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) as President and assigned four ministries to the LDK and two each to the PDK and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK).

Council members will recall that, in addition to this division of ministries under the coalition agreement, the Constitutional Framework reserves one ministry to the Kosovo Serbs and one ministry to another minority community. This latter ministry has been filled by a member of the Bosniac/Gorani VATAN coalition, which has four seats in the Assembly.

Unfortunately, however, the Kosovo Serb Return Coalition (Povratak) has not thus far put forward a ministerial candidate. Nevertheless, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Steiner, hopes that this can happen shortly. He welcomed the fact that on 28 February, when the agreement on the coalition Government was reached, Mr. Čović — whom we are happy to see with us today — in an interview with the Serbian media, stated that he was encouraged by the agreement, which guaranteed an equal approach to all communities in Kosovo, and that Povratak expected at least one post in the future Government of Kosovo.

The coalition agreement was endorsed on 4 March by more than a two-thirds majority of the Kosovo Assembly. Kosovo Serb Assembly members

participated in the vote, although they voted to abstain. The approval of the agreement voted in the President of Kosovo, the Prime Minister and the Ministers nominated by the parties. Two remaining Assembly presidency members put forward by the PDK were endorsed by a separate vote, bringing the full complement of that body to nine members.

Shortly before the Assembly meeting, allegations of a serious nature were made against Prime Minister-designate Rexhepi. These allegations were investigated by UNMIK police and by KFOR, and were found to be not substantiated.

These accusations were not considered helpful in building inter-communal trust and a workable relationship between all communities in the provisional institutions of self-government.

Following the Assembly's endorsement of the President and the Government, both President Rugova and Prime Minister Rexhepi made statements to the press on several issues, including the issue of independence. Mr. Steiner spoke with both Mr. Rugova and Mr. Rexhepi shortly after the statements were made, underlined to them that such remarks were not helpful and emphasized that Kosovo's provisional institutions of self-government must concentrate on those areas transferred to them by the Constitutional Framework.

As I mentioned, the Return Coalition has not yet nominated a candidate for its reserved Ministry — the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development. It has, in fact, now conditioned its participation in the Government on the allocation of one extra ministry to the Kosovo Serbs — the Ministry of Returns, an area that is reserved for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General under the Constitutional Framework. Mr. Steiner has sought to accommodate the wishes of the Kosovo Serbs and to encourage their constructive engagement through creative alternatives to the establishment of an actual ministry.

He met with the Return Coalition on 19 March and offered a package that includes the creation of the position of Assistant Minister for the Coordination of Returns and Community Affairs within the Office of the Prime Minister. Mr. Steiner also offered the creation of an advisory post for the Kosovo Serbs in UNMIK's Office of Returns and Communities. The Return Coalition was encouraged by Mr. Steiner to appoint a qualified Kosovo Serb to their designated Ministry and not to overlook the opportunity for participation in the civil service, where hundreds of posts for qualified Kosovo Serbs remain to be filled. We very much hope that the Return Coalition will resolve their internal difficulties and take Mr. Steiner up on the offer he has made to them. It would indeed be a great shame if, after all the efforts that have been made on all sides, the Kosovo Serbs were to deny themselves the opportunity of participating in the Government.

Mr. Steiner again met with the Return Coalition yesterday, 26 March, to continue the discussion on Kosovo Serb participation in the Government. In response to the Coalition's insistence on creating an extra-institutional ministerial portfolio on returns, Mr. Steiner explained that this was contrary to the Constitutional Framework. Not only is there no legal basis for a ministry to be created outside the provisional Government, the issue of return is a special responsibility of the international community and falls under the reserved powers of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and therefore it cannot be delegated to the institutions of self-government. The Special Representative intends actively to continue his efforts to engage the Kosovo Serbs in the Government institutions and to find a solution within the Constitutional Framework. Mr. Steiner would, of course, welcome the Council's support in this regard.

Now that a Government has been formed, the transfer of authority has begun. The transitional departments have been transformed into ministries, and the provisional institutions of self-government must now get down to the actual business of governing. The Government first met on 15 March and again on 22 March and was urged by Prime Minister Rexhepi to work together for all of Kosovo's communities. The discussion focused on the priorities of each Ministry, with the aim of drawing up a Government plan. Ministries are currently working on establishing their offices and on recruiting members of the civil service, including members of minority communities. Mr. Rexhepi and some of his Ministers have already met with representatives of international financial institutions and with donors to urge continued support for Kosovo.

On 20 March Mr. Steiner and the Commander of KFOR, General Valentin, had lunch with the President

of Kosovo, the Prime Minister and the President of the Assembly. It was agreed that this format, which has been dubbed the "2+3", will be used on a regular basis to address policy issues and to solve problems in an informal manner.

Members of the Kosovo Assembly are being trained through the Assembly Support Initiative, set up by the institution-building pillar of UNMIK, to provide training in areas such as legislative ethics and oversight of the executive. UNMIK is also encouraging the strong interest shown by members of Kosovo's civil society in starting a dialogue with the provisional institutions of self-government. On 7 March key non-governmental organization (NGO) leaders agreed to work with the institution-building pillar to establish an advisory board of NGO leaders to strengthen the NGO role in the legislative and policy-making process.

A key priority in the economic sector is the creation of jobs. The high level of unemployment, particularly among young people — it still stands at 50 per cent — constitutes a potential threat to the stability of Kosovo. Privatization is seen as an important means of generating economic development, and UNMIK is working hard to establish a favourable environment in which this can go forward.

The overall security situation has improved over the last month, and the murder rate is declining. Between 1 January and 11 March of this year, there were 16 murders in Kosovo. If that rate — although it is still high — continues, UNMIK police expect the number of murders this year to be lower than in the last two years, when, in comparison, we had, unfortunately, 250 murders in 2000 and 136 in 2001.

Attacks on minority communities continued, however, although less frequently in some regions than in previous months. A heavy police presence, curfews in trouble spots and several arrests have had an impact on the crime situation. Overall, UNMIK considers that freedom of movement has improved, particularly in the Gnjilane area, where there appeared to be more independent movement of Kosovo Serbs throughout the region.

The new UNMIK Police Commissioner, Mr. Stefan Feller from Germany, took up his duties on 15 March. Mr. Feller, as members of the Council may know, is no newcomer to the Mission — he served as Deputy Police Commissioner until May of last year. We welcome the continuity of experience that his appointment will bring to the Mission.

An important initiative under way at the moment is the second weapons amnesty, which began on 15 March and will continue until 15 April. This is the second weapons amnesty that KFOR and UNMIK police have run. The Council may recall that the first was last June, just before Regulation 2001/7, on the Authorization of Possession of Weapons in Kosovo, entered into force. This second amnesty coincides with the formation of the Government, which, in its first official meeting on 15 March, lent its full support to the effort to reduce the number of weapons in circulation in Kosovo.

Progress has been made in the fight against organized crime through the promulgation on 18 March of Regulation 2002/6, on Covert and Technical Measures of Surveillance and Investigation. This regulation is designed to enhance the investigative and prosecutorial capacity with regard to organized crime cases by enabling the police and prosecutors to use various types of covert activity. Another important step forward was the establishment at the end of February of a unit within the Department of Justice to deal with sensitive information and operations. One of the important functions of this unit will be to transform intelligence into evidence that can be used in a court of law.

On returns, UNMIK's Office of Returns and Communities is currently planning returns to 25 different locations throughout Kosovo. Local and regional working groups are meeting regularly throughout Kosovo to develop consensus among all stakeholders — including the majority Kosovo Albanian community — regarding returns, and to plan specific projects. A comprehensive damage assessment of 66 potential return locations has now been completed. Damage to property and related infrastructure was found to be severe and will require considerable financial assistance for reconstruction efforts.

An important part of the planning process for returns is, of course, confidence-building measures aimed at promoting reconciliation and a climate conducive to return. Several reconciliation projects are under way in mixed municipalities, such as Kamenica, where a multi-ethnic youth project has been launched, and in Strpce. The institution-building pillar of

UNMIK has also brought together Kosovo Albanian civil society representatives and non-governmental organizations from Serbia to develop civic dialogue and build trust. A similar exercise was carried out by bringing Kosovo Albanian journalists to visit Belgrade media outlets with a view to promoting understanding and cooperation.

A comprehensive returns package includes not only preparing the ground for returns, but creating effective mechanisms to allow the concerned communities to participate in the process. Mr. Steiner hopes that this inclusive approach that he has offered the Kosovo Serbs will be accepted, as the active participation of all communities is key to a successful returns process.

The Special Representative has stressed that cooperation with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will continue to be defined by the Common Document through the High-Ranking Working Group. The past month has seen a great deal of activity in the two sub-groups of the High-Ranking Working Group dealing with police and judicial cooperation respectively.

Lengthy negotiations between UNMIK and Mr. Čović culminated, happily, yesterday, in the transfer to Kosovo of 146 Kosovo Albanian detainees from Serbia. The initial figure stated was 153, but during the process of preparing the transfer it was learned that 7 of them had previously been released. Mr. Steiner is very satisfied that all known Albanian detainees who wanted to return to Kosovo have now been able to do so. The transfer was preceded by the handing over by the Serbian authorities of the court files relating to the majority of the remaining detainees.

Those files were reviewed by officials in UNMIK's Department of Justice, including by international judges. The judicial review determined that a significant number of detainees had convictions that were legally invalid, and this information was communicated to the Serbian authorities. Accordingly, the majority of the prisoners, most of whom had convictions relating to activities during the Kosovo conflict, were released within 24 hours of their return to Kosovo. A smaller number of detainees were found to have valid convictions, and they will serve out their sentences in Kosovo. The case files for the remaining detainees were incomplete, and those detainees will continue to be held until their records are located or until a determination can be made that their records cannot be found.

A further step forward in cooperation was the first joint visit — on 13 March — to an alleged illegal detention centre in Kosovo, pursuant to the Protocol on Joint Verification Teams on Hidden Prisons. The visit confirmed that the site was, in fact, a mental institute administered by the Department of Health.

Turning to relations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Steiner met with President Trajkovski in Skopje on 18 March. The visit yielded two important agreements. The first related to the establishment of a joint expert committee to address the practical situation on the ground resulting from the border demarcation Agreement between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Government of Kosovo has lent its full support to Mr. Steiner's efforts to reduce tensions in the border area by addressing these practical problems, and expressed a willingness to participate in the planned joint expert committee.

Secondly, agreement was reached on the need to initiate police cooperation with the objective of establishing a memorandum of understanding to deal with overall crime prevention and the fight against organized crime.

In conclusion, I would like to say that, as Council members can see, the six weeks since Mr. Steiner arrived in Kosovo on 14 February have been rather busy. His familiarization with the mission and the main local actors on the ground has led him to conclude that, in order for the nascent Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to focus on the tasks ahead and for UNMIK to have a clear road-map for itself, a joint set of benchmarks is needed to act as a set of target objectives in key areas. Work is under way to identify what realistic benchmarks can be set, and we will keep the Council informed of progress.

I am sure that the Council will join UNMIK in welcoming in particular the news that the Kosovo Albanian detainees have now been transferred to Kosovo. This has been an emotionally charged issue that has been an obstacle to reconciliation since UNMIK was established in Kosovo. We hope that the resolution of this matter in a way that upholds the rule of law, together with UNMIK's continued commitment to determining the fate of the missing persons, will boost inter-communal cooperation as Kosovo's

Government gets down to the hard work of provisional self-government.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nebojša Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of the Yugoslav constituent Republic of Serbia and President of the Coordination Centre of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

Mr. Čović (Yugoslavia) (*spoke in Serbian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): Before I begin my comments on Kosovo, I would like to give the Council a brief update on the situation in southern Serbia; I have prepared a more detailed written briefing for review. Thanks to the support and assistance of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), KFOR and many of the countries represented here on a bilateral basis, we are continuing to consolidate the reconciliation process in southern Serbia. To this end, I would like to list some of the most recent confidence-building measures in this process.

Over 345 new recruits, including 213 ethnic Albanians and 23 women, have gone through OSCE-assisted training and been assigned in southern Serbia as multi-ethnic police. The Serbian Government spent more than $16,882,000 on various infrastructure projects in 2001 and plans to spend a further $10,000,000 this year. This is in addition to the considerable assistance provided by other countries. Municipal elections are scheduled for 15 or 16 June. We have withdrawn 12,282 special unit soldiers from the region as peace has been restored. There is full freedom of movement and security. The integration of representatives of the ethnic Albanian and Roma communities into State institutions has been intensified. Amnesty and abolition have been fully implemented. The army units will be withdrawn from the school building in Bujanovac and the shoe factory in Presevo by 15 April. 8,982 internally displaced ethnic Albanians have returned to their homes in southern Serbia, while document problems for the Albanians have been resolved to allow their diplomas and other certificates issued in Kosovo and Metohija to be fully recognized.

More remains to be done, however. We must continue to improve the infrastructure, particularly for returning refugees and internally displaced persons, and we must increase employment possibilities for everyone. We need the Council's continued help on these and other issues.

I wish to touch briefly on Macedonia. I have been in frequent touch with the leaders of Macedonia and given them advice and encouragement based on the model we developed together for southern Serbia.

Turning to Kosovo and Metohija, the most important point that I wish to make is that we are currently in a race against time. Two different forces are going to be pushing harder and harder to come to a final solution for Kosovo and Metohija: the ethnic Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija and, for separate reasons, the international community, which is growing tired of investing resources and energy in the Balkans. If this last statement should be doubted, one need only consider the sharp reduction in refugee funding for the Balkans for next year or the statements made by various troop contributors about withdrawing all or part of their forces.

I firmly believe that we have less time than most of us think or want to prepare for this final solution, so every day counts. I personally think that, unless we make major progress on key issues this very year, we will face immense problems.

There are two basic interrelated tasks in Kosovo and Metohija: building institutions and building a true multi-ethnic society. For obvious reasons, I am going to concentrate more on the latter than on the former in my remarks, though both are crucial to real success.

Unlike the situation of ethnic groups in Bosnia, the Serbs of Kosovo have been given absolutely no assurance whatsoever that their language, culture, religion or way of life will definitely survive and flourish in Kosovo and Metohija. Quite to the contrary, everything really depends on the prevailing whim or good will of UNMIK and KFOR, with absolutely no assurance for the future. This is an absolutely critical flaw, because nothing that the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija are now seeing can give them any comfort at all about their future. Freedom of movement outside of a few enclaves is totally impossible, refugee return is almost non-existent and a climate of violence permeates the very air that the Serbs breathe. There are those who will say that the situation is improving. They

should not be believed. The Serbs and other minorities have simply learned the rules of the game and how to stay out of harm's way.

In November 2001, I signed with then Special Representative Haekkerup a Common Document outlining how we would work together to improve the situation in Kosovo and Metohija. I believe that the key to our common future is to fully implement that agreement in good faith and with as much energy as possible. This includes making a major push this year on refugee return; confronting extremists on all sides; insisting that there be real freedom of movement throughout Kosovo and Metohija; working hard to make the institutions work; and trying to account for the missing on both sides.

As I speak here today, virtually all of the remaining 146 Albanian prisoners from Kosovo and Metohija who were transferred from Kosovo prisons in the last days of the war to Serbia proper are on their way to UNMIK in an agreement worked out with UNMIK. A companion agreement will allow Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija who were arrested after 5 October 2000 in Serbia proper to apply to serve out their sentences in Kosovo and Metohija and Serbs who were arrested and convicted in Kosovo and Metohija to apply to serve out their sentences in Serbia proper. This removes one of the key issues that has long been cited as a block to genuine reconciliation between the ethnic groups in Kosovo and Metohija. I hope that proves to be the case.

I am here today to ask for the Council's help in moving forcefully to create a true multi-ethnic society in Kosovo and Metohija. The stakes are very high. In Yugoslavia and Serbia, we are trying hard to overcome the legacy of the past and to move towards a democratic, market-oriented society, taking its rightful place in the European Union. We face immense challenges, however, from the legacy of problems left behind by Slobodan Milosevic, including a failed economy, the Kosovo and Metohija issue, coming to terms with our past and with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and the Montenegro question. If we are not successful in creating a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo and Metohija, the resulting turmoil and dislocation will have a dramatic negative impact on the political situation in Yugoslavia. At the very least, it will shift the focus from economic, democratic, nation-building issues to nationalism. At worst, it could well return to power those forces of darkness and despair that ruled over my country for far too long.

But as difficult and dangerous as that scenario may be, it is in fact just as bad, or even worse, for the future of Kosovo and Metohija. If extremist groups there are allowed to prevail, the real losers will be all the citizens of Kosovo and Metohija. Those same extremist groups that bomb buses carrying Serbs are also killing other Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija who do not share their extremism. What sort of society will result if the extremists prevail? What sort of relationship can they expect to have with Serbia if they drive the local Serbs out of Kosovo and Metohija? Believe me, for Kosovo and Metohija to survive and flourish economically, it must have a positive, constructive relationship with the rest of Yugoslavia. Otherwise it will continue in perpetuity to rely on the generosity of the international community.

Finally, let me say a word about the relationship today between Belgrade and the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija. There are those, including many in the international community, who would prefer to build a five-metre-high wall around the boundary of Kosovo and Metohija with the rest of Yugoslavia, the theory being that the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija must learn to live entirely within Kosovo and Metohija. That same theory seems, by the way, to prejudge the future of Kosovo and Metohija by ensuring that it would be totally independent of the rest of Yugoslavia.

Let me say more with sadness than with anger that if those members of the international community continue to build that wall they will certainly succeed, because they undoubtedly have the power to do so. But virtually all the Serbs now in Kosovo and Metohija will be on the other side of that wall in Yugoslavia and Serbia, both putting enormous social pressures on us and creating the very poisonous situation in Kosovo and Metohija which I described earlier.

Unless and until the Serbs of Kosovo and Metohija feel secure in their position in Kosovo and Metohija and are free from violence and certain that their children will have full opportunities to speak their language, practice their religion and travel freely, they will want a lifeline to Serbia itself, as normal people anywhere would.

We in the Coordinating Centre have demonstrated, by the get-out-the-vote campaign and now on the Kosovo Albanian prisoner issue, that we

can play a positive role. I ask the Council to help us to continue to do so by working with us on enhanced return of refugees from Yugoslavia to their homes in Kosovo and Metohija, on ensuring freedom of movement for all in Kosovo and Metohija, on bringing to an end standoffs and confrontation with UNMIK and KFOR in Mitrovica, and on a comprehensive programme to locate the missing on all sides. That is the best way forward for Kosovo and Metohija, for Yugoslavia and for the region as a whole.

I wish to draw attention to the detailed briefing material on results in the implementation of the plan for resolution of the crisis in southern Serbia, and on results in the implementation of the Common Document for Kosovo and Metohija of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and UNMIK, copies of which have been made available to members of the Council. Annexed to that material are copies of two very important documents: the Agreement on the Basic Principles for the Holding of Municipal By-elections in South Serbia, and the UNMIK-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Agreement on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Nebojša Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of the Yugoslav constituent Republic of Serbia and President of the Coordination Centre of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Corr (Ireland): I would like first to thank you, Mr. President, for arranging this public meeting on Kosovo today. I welcome Deputy Prime Minister Čović to the Chamber and thank him for the statement he just made. I wish also to thank Assistant Secretary-General Annabi for his very comprehensive and helpful briefing.

Ireland fully agrees with the statement that will be delivered by Spain on behalf of the European Union, so I shall make just a few comments of particular importance to my delegation.

My delegation congratulates the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Michael Steiner, on the ambitious and positive start he has made to his work, building on the achievements of his predecessors. Mr. Steiner has in recent weeks outlined a comprehensive vision for Kosovo's future development, founded on economic progress, the rule of law and a fair and just society for all people in Kosovo. We urge all of Kosovo's elected leaders to work together, including with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Kosovo Force (KFOR), to achieve the objectives outlined by the Special Representative. Cooperation aimed at achieving those objectives can only enhance Kosovo's European perspectives.

Ireland welcomes the election by the Kosovo Assembly, last month, of Ibrahim Rugova as President and Bajram Rexhepi as Prime Minister of Kosovo, as well as the formation of a Government. Those elections, which ended a critical period of deadlock in Kosovo, are a vital step towards the full implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). The election of the President and Prime Minister gives real meaning to the views of the Kosovar people as expressed in the elections of last November. We remain concerned, however, at the continued difficulties regarding the participation of the Kosovo Serb Return Coalition in the new Government, and we call on the Kosovo Serb leaders to resolve this new impasse rapidly. We greatly appreciate the facilitation efforts — which I believe Mr. Annabi characterized as creative — of Mr. Steiner in this regard, and we give the Special Representative our full support.

However, ultimately the political leaders in Kosovo must take responsibility for the development of a genuine political dialogue both within and between Kosovo's communities. We are encouraged that there has been some progress at the municipal level, and we look forward to a more inclusive and constructive approach at the highest level as the 21 September municipal elections approach.

The development of a meaningful dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade will be essential to the achievement of the objectives outlined by the Special Representative. The Common Document signed by Belgrade and UNMIK last November provides the framework for such discussions, but it is essential now that Kosovo's elected leaders participate in the High-Ranking Working Group and enhance that dialogue.

Ireland welcomes the creation of a joint expert committee by UNMIK and the authorities of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to address practical problems on the ground relating to the implementation of the 2001 border agreement between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. We hope that the committee

can resolve practical issues in a pragmatic way to reduce tensions in the border zone.

The slow rate of Kosovo Serb returns remains 0worrying; it is outpaced by the continued rate of departures. Ireland again encourages the early development of a framework of economic and other measures in order to increase the numbers of those resettling, and remaining, in Kosovo. We appreciated the comments that Mr. Annabi made earlier in that regard. The resettlement process is a key element of the reconciliation process in the province.

Ireland welcomes the transfer, as outlined by Mr. Annabi, of Kosovo Albanian prisoners by the authorities in Belgrade to UNMIK. The detention of those prisoners for almost three years beyond the end of the conflict was unjustifiable, and we hope that the transfer will now assist efforts to develop a real dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. The realization of that commitment by the Belgrade authorities removes an unnecessary irritant and is a major step in the process of reconciliation between the Albanian and Serbian communities in Kosovo.

Ireland also believes that the fight against organized crime must be an absolute priority for the authorities in Kosovo. Without steps to combat crime and the violence that often accompanies it, democracy cannot take effective hold in Kosovo. The establishment of the conditions for real economic growth will also be essential in combating organized crime in the long term. Economic success can follow only in a society based on the rule of law.

Ireland strongly believes that the successful development of Kosovo will help to ensure peace and stability in South-East Europe. Kosovo's vocation lies in Europe. Ireland believes its path — at a speed which only Kosovo itself can determine — must surely lie in the process of European integration. This, in turn, depends on building a truly democratic and multi-ethnic society. We, along with our partners in the European Union, will continue to support greater integration and regional cooperation through the Stability Pact and the stabilization and association process.

Mr. Gokool (Mauritius): I thank Mr. Hédi Annabi for his update on the situation in Kosovo. We also welcome Mr. Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, and we thank him for his statement. We are also thankful for the detailed briefing attached to the copy of his statement, and we note with great satisfaction the steady progress towards the final solution to the problems in Kosovo. I would like to commend here the efforts of all the parties in the consolidation of the reconciliation process in southern Serbia.

My delegation congratulates the parties in Kosovo on reaching an agreement on the coalition Government, and on the choice of their President and Prime Minister. The compromise reached demonstrates the good will to work together towards creating a democratic, multi-ethnic and stable Kosovo. Indeed, this development reassures the international community of the strong determination of all parties to build a bright future for all the people of Kosovo.

We would also like to express our gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Steiner for all the efforts he has made to facilitate the dialogue between the parties. We wish Mr. Steiner could be present today to share his views on the challenges facing Kosovo as the new institutions embark on the path to self-rule.

We are happy to note that all the ingredients are in place for the Provisional Self-Government to start full operations and take over executive powers from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). UNMIK has so far fulfilled efficiently its duties of assuming interim governance, but now the reins are in the hands of Kosovo's leaders. We encourage them to sustain the momentum and show that they can govern effectively and fairly for all the citizens of Kosovo.

The agreement reached last month by political leaders contains the right mix of all the necessary components that will ensure the smooth running of the Provisional Self-Government institutions. We note, among others, respect and promotion of democratic principles; free and equal treatment towards all of Kosovo's inhabitants, without discrimination; the creation of conditions conducive to reconciliation and tolerance among different communities; and the adoption of measures to foster rapid economic development. All these appear to be promising, but it is one thing to agree on paper and another to put it into practice — especially in the case of Kosovo, where a democratically elected Government is functioning for the first time. The test is now for the political parties to

show that their will to operate a functioning parliamentary democracy is under way.

Of no less importance is the economic situation of the province. So far, donors have contributed largely in the reconstruction of the economy. Kosovo needs the full engagement of the donor community, as it has suffered from decades of under-investment. We therefore call on all the donors to sustain their assistance to the province. We hope that the request made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Steiner, during his recent visit to European countries will be met with a positive response.

We also welcome the decision of the Provisional Self-Government to adopt the legislation necessary to create the conditions for a market-based economy and to encourage private direct investment. If Kosovo is to stand on its own feet, it cannot depend solely on foreign funding and a single means of revenue collection. Private direct investment in the province will open up opportunities for the people to engage in gainful activities, and it will also positively contribute to creating a stable society. The sooner the decision makers adopt the necessary legislation, the better it will be for the province to reap the benefits. At the same time, the high rate of unemployment can be addressed with the participation of the private and public sectors, and with more investment.

A flourishing economy will also help in bringing internally displaced persons back to their homeland. A high rate of returns can only be possible if a safe and secure environment is guaranteed for the minority communities, and if property rights are restored to them. It is for the political leaders to put all their ideas into constructive action in favour of the integration of minorities into Kosovo's society.

The total elimination of arms and ammunition from the province is equally important if a secure environment is to be created for all the inhabitants. In that regard, we welcome the weapons-amnesty programme set up by UNMIK and KFOR to combat organized crime. We urge all Kosovo to cooperate with UNMIK and KFOR to wipe out all illegal possession of arms and ammunition.

Lastly, we encourage the leaders of the Provisional Self-Government to enhance dialogue with Belgrade in line with the provisions of the Common Document, signed in November 2001. Working together in the High-level Working Group on such practical issues as cooperation in security and tackling organized crime, missing persons and minority rights will surely reinforce mutual confidence. We were happy to learn that the Yugoslav authorities yesterday returned to Kosovo all Albanian detainees held in Serbian prisons since 1999, in accordance with the commitment under the Common Document.

Mr. Diallo (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): On the eve of the expiry of your country's mandate to preside over the Security Council, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this meeting, and to tell you once again how much we appreciate the work done by your delegation. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hédi Annabi for the valuable information he has just given us. We would like to welcome the presence among us of Mr. Nebojša Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia and President of the Coordination Centre of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija. We also thank him for his statement.

The last two public meetings of the Council on the issue of Kosovo have enabled us to express our concerns about such pending questions as the political deadlock over the selection of a president and prime minister and the formation of a government, as well as problems linked to security and development. Today my delegation expresses its gratification at the Kosovo Assembly's appointment on 4 March of Mr. Ibrahim Rugova and Mr. Bajram Rexhepi as, respectively, President and Prime Minister of the province. That decision is an important step forward in the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Council. We await with interest the participation of the Kosovo Serb Return Coalition (Povratak) in the Government. We also support Special Representative of the Secretary-General Michael Steiner's efforts to organize municipal elections in September 2002.

With regard to security, we welcome the entry into force of the new weapons and ammunition hand-over programme to retrieve illegally held weapons by Kosovars through a promise of amnesty. We appeal to all those concerned to cooperate in ensuring the success of the programme.

The success of any stabilization effort in Kosovo depends on a programme of reinforcement of institutions and reconciliation, based on tolerance and

mutual respect, taking into account the interests of all Kosovars. The strengthening of cooperation among the elected representatives of Kosovo, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Belgrade authorities will be a measure of confidence in future committed action.

In the humanitarian area, my delegation appreciates the establishment of an inter-ethnic consortium that will take over from the World Food Programme on 31 March 2002. The six local non-governmental organizations that make up the consortium should enjoy the joint support of the international community and the elected representatives and the people of Kosovo.

The question of delineating the border between Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia deserves our attention. We welcome Mr. Michael Steiner's announcement on 18 March of the forthcoming creation of a joint Kosovo-former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia commission charged with settling the practical questions that affect the inhabitants on both sides of the border. We appeal to all the parties to rely on dialogue in order to arrive at a negotiated solution that will benefit all concerned.

Finally, my delegation welcomes the settlement of the question of Albanian Kosovars held in the Republic of Serbia and encourages the parties to pursue various activities with a view to the full implementation of the Common Document.

The President: I thank the representative of Guinea for his kind words addressed to my delegation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr. Nebojša Čović. We welcome the specific measures, outlined in his statement, that have been taken by Belgrade in order to promote the comprehensive implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). We are also grateful to Assistant Secretary-General Hédi Annabi for his briefing.

The situation in Kosovo is developing quickly but, unfortunately, not always in the direction outlined by resolution 1244 (1999) — indeed, far from it. The international community's attention to the Kosovo settlement should not flag if we want to prevent that province from turning into the cancer of Europe. The new head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), from the very outset, has managed to accomplish quickly one of the important tasks — breaking the political deadlock caused by the inability of the Kosovar leaders to agree on the distribution of the top leadership posts in the province's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. However, it is clear that the institutionalization of power in these organs has not helped accomplish the main task — guaranteeing the security of the province's population, primarily the non-Albanian segment.

We believe that the priority efforts of the international presences in Kosovo should focus on creating the right conditions for security and equality for all the province's inhabitants, irrespective of ethnic origin or other characteristics. Although some positive changes have taken place in this area, the international presences in Kosovo still have many problems to face, as was confirmed clearly by the facts that Mr. Čović and Mr. Annabi mentioned in their statements.

Again, we must state that the return of refugees and internally displaced persons is being intolerably delayed. This situation is undermining the authority of the international presences in the eyes of the local Serbian and other non-Albanian communities and of the international community as well. Refugee returns will be an important indicator of readiness to hold the new municipal elections planned for September.

In this connection, we are concerned that the European Commission has postponed the donor conference to raise funds for implementing the programme for the return of refugees to the province. That conference had been planned for April, and now it has been postponed until October or even November — after the planned election date. This will definitely make it less possible for UNMIK to make normal preparations for these elections, which should be fair and just for all those who now live in Kosovo or who lived there previously.

We are also concerned that the acuteness of the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons is not being valued properly in UNMIK's 2002-2003 budget. We know that UNMIK has stated several times that the return of refugees and internally displaced persons and the creation of normal conditions for national minorities are Mission priorities. Nevertheless, UNMIK is not asking for any additional human or material resources for these purposes in the budget.

That is surprising, and we hope that the situation will be redressed as a matter of urgency.

Other priority tasks of UNMIK and KFOR include, in our view, the creation of the conditions for a multi-ethnic society in the province and, to that end, the establishment of an inter-communal dialogue, as well as vigorous action against crime and criminal organizations, the completion of demilitarization and the disarmament of former Kosovo Liberation Army combatants, and the blocking of any attempt by the leaders of the Kosovo Protection Corps to give that body a military role.

Today there is talk about the importance of cooperation between UNMIK and Belgrade. We are convinced that Belgrade should become a partner of UNMIK in defining priorities and resolving practical issues relating to the establishment of normal conditions in Kosovo, in the context of the comprehensive implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). Vital tasks such as the creation of a basis for a market economy, privatization, the involvement of Kosovo in projects included in the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe and the return of displaced persons (which has already been discussed) all these tasks must be carried out in close consultation with the Yugoslav authorities. It is important to increase specific contacts on these questions and others in the context of the High-Ranking Working Group created on the basis of the Common Document dated 5 November last year. In addition, the Document itself must, of course, be implemented fully.

In the light of developments with which the Council is familiar, we think it would be timely to step up the joint actions of UNMIK, Belgrade and Skopje to provide speedy practical implementation of the Agreement on delineation of the border between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Macedonia dated 23 February 2001. We anticipate speedy action by UNMIK's leadership, who should take the initiative here.

We support the efforts by KFOR and UNMIK to try to reduce the large numbers of illegal weapons and explosive substances drifting around the province; ideally, we would like such weapons and substances to be eliminated. We think, however, that those efforts have fallen short, particularly given the current level of political extremism in Kosovo. Moreover, KFOR and UNMIK should provide proper control over the Kosovar section of the border between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Albania and Macedonia.

As the Council knows, the representatives of the international presences are not ruling out the possibility that, with the onset of spring, the Albanian extremist groups in Macedonia, with support from Kosovo, may become more active. We hope that these issues are being constantly addressed by the international presences.

The problem of curbing extremism is an acute one, not only in Kosovo but on a regional scale as well. We believe that this merits our attention, as it is a regional threat.

We believe that, at this stage, the focus of all of the efforts of the international community should be on the tasks I have just spoken of, which relate directly to facilitating normal living conditions in Kosovo and to creating conditions that will allow for a genuine multi-ethnic society. All those who lived in Kosovo earlier should be able to live there now, in their homes, and to coexist normally as human beings. Until these conditions are created, it would be not merely counterproductive but downright politically dangerous to start talking about any final status for Kosovo.

The province is facing many problems, which we have to resolve urgently. Here I fully agree with the points made by Deputy Prime Minister Čović. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Steiner, is well known as a very energetic and persistent person who is able to get results. We hope that all of these qualities will be demonstrated actively in Kosovo — strictly in keeping, of course, with resolution 1244 (1999).

We think that in April the Security Council should carry out a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of that resolution, with the participation of the Special Representative.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): I should like to start by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Annabi for his very specific and useful briefing. I should like also to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this public debate on Kosovo this month. I should like also to welcome the presence of Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Nebojša Čović at the Council table today and to thank him for his important statement.

Bulgaria associates itself with the statement to be made later on by Spain on behalf of the European Union. I should like simply to make a few comments in my national capacity.

My country believes that the election of the President of Kosovo, Mr. Ibrahim Rugova; of the Prime Minister, Mr. Bajram Rexhepi; and of the other members of the Government on 4 March 2002 represents an encouraging step that will create favourable conditions for the reconstruction of the province's economy and for the establishment of the rule of law, and that will promote the combat against violence and organized crime.

Bulgaria is grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Michael Steiner, for his contribution to the conclusion of the agreement on the composition of the Kosovo government. We would like to assure him that he continue to count on Bulgaria's full support.

My country appeals to the newly elected Kosovo leadership to act responsibly in exercising the prerogatives they now enjoy under the Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government and resolution 1244 (1999). It is important that these new leaders respect international agreements on Kosovo, in particular the border demarcation agreement signed by the Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on 23 February 2001, which was endorsed by the Security Council in its presidential statement of 7 March 2001.

Bulgaria welcomes the cooperation between UNMIK and the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which is of great importance in improving the security situation and in building confidence in the entire region.

In this connection, I should like to welcome the recent transfer of Albanian-speaking prisoners from Belgrade to Pristina, and I should like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank Deputy Prime Minister Čović for his personal involvement in that important decision.

My country welcomes the decision taken by UNMIK and the Macedonian authorities to set up a joint UNMIK-Republic of Macedonia commission entrusted with resolving practical issues related to the common border, under existing agreements. Bulgaria supports the measures taken by UNMIK to concentrate its efforts on combating organized crime in all of its forms — traffic in human beings, in drugs and in weapons. Additional resources will have to be earmarked to enhance the effectiveness of these activities. The socio-economic impact of these phenomena could jeopardize nascent institutions as well as inter-ethnic relations that are already very fragile. Bulgaria will continue to demand that the circumstances of the brutal murder in Kosovo of our compatriot Valentin Krumov be brought to light fully, and that those responsible are arrested as soon as possible.

My country supports the international community's efforts to respond appropriately to the funding needs of projects of vital importance to Kosovo. In this connection, we expect the donors' conference to provide the necessary resources, in the framework of concrete undertakings relating to democratization programmes and to the return of refugees.

My country wishes to emphasize the importance of the strategy developed by the European Commission and the World Bank, which will to make it possible to reduce Kosovo's dependence on outside assistance and which, we believe, should give priority to small and medium-sized businesses.

Bulgaria will continue to allocate resources, to the extent of its ability, for its continued participation in collective instruments for the maintenance of peace and stability in Kosovo. Let me recall that 207 Bulgarians are working in Civpol and in the KFOR military contingent. Thirteen other Bulgarians are working in Kosovo in the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

My country intends to establish a permanent diplomatic presence in Kosovo through a liaison office in Pristina.

Over the last few months, we have seen budding ethnic tolerance developing in the province. We welcome this positive development, but we remain aware that it is only the minimal beginning, perhaps too minimal, of a process that is undoubtedly going to be difficult. Deputy Prime Minister Čović spoke very eloquently about this aspect. We will continue to support the emergence of a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo, with respect for the rule of law and human rights as primary considerations.

Only UNMIK's and KFOR's presence can make it possible to guarantee security and normalcy for all of the inhabitants of Kosovo, in close cooperation with the local authorities. That presence is a decisive factor for security in Kosovo, as it can serve to promote the return to Kosovo of refugees and internally displaced persons of all ethnic groups.

In this context, my delegation would like to welcome the KFOR and UNMIK amnesty programme. It is designed to promote the handover of illegally held arms and ammunition over a one-month period. We feel that this is a very important and positive step aimed at enhancing security in the province.

We would like also to welcome the decision by the Belgrade authorities to transfer prisoners of Albanian origin to Pristina, as I mentioned earlier. This is an important gesture of openness on the part of the federal Government.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that only a European perspective with respect to the entire region can provide a response to the long-term problems of Kosovo.

In that connection, I would like to say that, as a neighbouring country, Bulgaria will continue to work, within the Council and elsewhere, to help get these aspirations translated into reality as soon as possible.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Hédi Annabi for the very valuable comprehensive briefing that he gave us, and I certainly want to join our colleagues in welcoming the two positive developments relating to self-government and the transfer of the prisoners back to Kosovo.

We would also like to thank Deputy Prime Minister Čović for his statement. In our view, he made some important points. I would like to use the bulk of my statement today to respond to some of the points that Mr. Čović made this morning. I would like to quote a few paragraphs of his statement.

He said:

> "Turning to Kosovo and Metohija, the most important point that I wish to make is that we are currently in a race against time. Two different forces are going to be pushing harder and harder to come to a final solution for Kosovo and Metohija: the ethnic Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija and, for separate reasons, the international community, which is growing tired of investing resources and energy in the Balkans. If this last statement should be doubted, one need only consider the sharp reduction in refugee funding for the Balkans for next year or the statements made by various troop contributors about withdrawing all or part of their forces.
>
> "I firmly believe that we have less time than most of us think or want to prepare for this final solution, so every day counts. I personally think that, unless we make major progress on key issues this very year, we will face immense problems."

I think that that was a very strong statement on the part of the Deputy Prime Minister. I believe that it behoves us as members of the Council to discuss whether or not we share that evaluation. If we share it, why do we do so? And if not, why not?

That brings me to a point that I was planning to make in today's discussion. I find that when we discuss the Kosovo issue we face a real paradox. We probably discuss it more regularly than any other issue — we have regular meetings once a month to discuss the Kosovo situation. Indeed, I think that this is our fifteenth discussion of the subject. But what we have had so far are 15 snapshots of the situation, with no clear indication of a trend line showing which way things are going in Kosovo. I think it is important for us actually to work out the trend line, especially in view of what Mr. Čović said.

I would like to add that if we do not do so, the media will do the job for us and come up with their own assessment of how we are doing in Kosovo. I would like to quote from two recent assessments. One was made yesterday in a broadcast by the German radio station *Deutsche Welle*. It said:

> "Three years after NATO joined up with Albanian rebels to expel Yugoslavian forces from the breakaway southern Serbian province, Kosovo is a weird western protectorate with half-fulfilled dreams and tough times ahead. It is still a broken place, despite the NATO intervention — or partly because of it, depending on how you look at it. Kosovo, the southernmost province of Serbia, is home to a mostly ethnic Albanian population and a thinning minority population of Serbs, and it is the temporary home to some 46,000 NATO troops. Their presence, a remnant

> of the military alliance's 78-day bombing campaign that began three years ago on Sunday, has brought the region some stability but no miracles."

I quote from an editorial in *The Washington Post*, entitled "The Kosovo Measure" and dated Saturday, 16 March. It states:

> "Like Afghanistan, Kosovo is a deeply impoverished land with extensive war damage and deep residual tensions among its different ethnic groups. So it is worth taking the measure of what reconstruction there has so far required — and what is still needed. NATO began with a peacekeeping force of 60,000 troops and today still has 36,000 troops deployed" —

I note that *Deutsche Welle* says that there are 46,000 troops.

The editorial report continues,

> "Sixty nations have sent military or civilian personnel to the Balkan province, and $2 billion has been spent just on civilian programmes since 1999."

The Washington Post goes on to compare the situation with Afghanistan, stating:

> "All this has been necessary for a province that is about the size of Connecticut, contains about 2 million people and is at least close to the rich nations of Europe. Afghanistan, which is 60 times larger than Kosovo, has 13 times its population and suffers from far greater impoverishment and war damage, has received nothing close to an equivalent commitment. Only $4.5 billion in reconstruction aid has been pledged so far, and the mandate of the small international peacekeeping force expires in few months."

Clearly, if we do not make our own assessments of what we have achieved or failed to achieve in Kosovo, we will be faced with assessments made by other parties. That is why we believe that it would be useful, in these monthly discussions, to step back and take a long view of what we are achieving in Kosovo. Here, we would like to reiterate two points that we made during the previous debate, in January. First, we said that we need to have a regular review of the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), because UNMIK is unusual in the sense that it has a mandate in perpetuity, when every other peacekeeping operation has very specific time frames.

In the second point that we made, we emphasized that that we also need very carefully to work out, over time, an exit strategy for Kosovo, because, bearing in mind the comments of the Deputy Prime Minister, if we want to ensure that we leave it in a good fashion, we must ensure that we build up to doing so.

In this regard, I was very encouraged by the concluding remarks of Ambassador Lavrov. If I got the translation right, he said that time had perhaps come to do a comprehensive survey of this issue and that it could be undertaken in the month of April. We hope that during that comprehensive survey we will be able to welcome Mr. Steiner to the Council. As our colleague from Mauritius said earlier, we would be very happy to welcome Mr. Steiner here to join in that review. At the same time, we hope that, during the comprehensive survey, we will also address a point that has been left hanging on Kosovo: the final resolution of Kosovo's future status.

I think that we are all aware that, in paragraph 11 (e), resolution 1244 (1999) calls on UNMIK to facilitate "a political process designed to determine Kosovo's future status, taking into account the Rambouillet accords". The Rambouillet accords were signed on 18 March 1999. Under those accords, three years after entry into force we were supposed to have formulated a mechanism for a final settlement for Kosovo. The three-year time frame expired on 18 March 2002, nine days ago. Perhaps when we meet in April to undertake a comprehensive survey we should ask ourselves what happened to that time frame that was set three years ago.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: Your presidency this month, sir, has been characterized by open debates on very important issues. I should like to thank Mr. Hédi Annabi for his very valuable statement on developments since 25 February. I would also like very warmly to welcome Mr. Nebojša Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and to thank him for the very detailed statement that he gave to the Council on the latest developments in Kosovo and the Balkans.

My delegation would like to express its satisfaction at the endorsement by the Kosovo

Assembly on 27 February of Mr. Ibrahim Rugova as President and at the formation of a Government in Kosovo under the leadership of Mr. Bajram Rexhepi, in accordance with the coalition agreement of 4 March. This was the first important step in the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999) towards breaking the impasse that has lasted for so long. It will allow the transitional entities in Kosovo fully to carry out their tasks in accordance with the Constitutional Framework. It will also strengthen the cultural dialogue among the many political parties in Kosovo, as Mr. Annabi pointed out in referring to the fact that the coalition Government is made up of representatives of all parties but one, which decided not to join the coalition but expressed its desire to participate. We hope that this desire will be fulfilled as soon as possible.

It is also a cause of satisfaction to us that these transitional departments are to become ministries. At the same time, we hope that all groups and principal ethnicities will enjoy equal and fair representation in the Government so that stability may prevail in those institutions. It is only right that we take into consideration the concerns expressed by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Yugoslav constituent Republic of Serbia. In doing so, we will promote stability in Kosovo in accordance with the agreements of November 2001.

I wish to reaffirm the importance of focusing on the security situation in the light of these positive developments. This will require a redoubling of efforts to establish conditions conducive to coexistence among all the elements of society in Kosovo and to improve relations among all communities there, thus strengthening the reconciliation process. It will also help to establish an equitable security and political situation and lead to the continued economic and social development of all sectors of the population in Kosovo.

As to the idea referred to by the Deputy Prime Minister of building a five-meter wall separating Kosovo from Yugoslavia, I found it very strange, particularly given that we live in an era that has rejected the erection of walls, such as the Berlin Wall, and rejoiced in its destruction. How can we now accept the erection of a new wall in that region?

We welcome the initiative of releasing Albanian prisoners to Pristina, which has come about through the efforts of the Yugoslav Government, particularly those of Deputy Prime Minister Čović.

We also wish to highlight the issue of the various ethnic minorities in Kosovo. These must be represented equitably in political life if we truly wish security and stability to prevail in Kosovo. In this regard, I am pleased to note the declining murder rate, as pointed out by Mr. Annabi, and the measures taken towards the second weapons amnesty in Kosovo. While these developments coincided with the formation of the new Government and will promote security in Kosovo, they do not resolve the issue of whether it is possible for these conditions to prevail, particularly in view of the extremism espoused by certain elements there. We must find an answer to this very important question.

We support the efforts made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Steiner, since he assumed the leadership of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo to maintain the rule of law and fully to implement resolution 1244 (1999). We hope that we will be able to hear a detailed briefing by Mr. Steiner in April on the true direction of and latest developments in the situation in Kosovo.

The President: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation wishes in turn to thank you, Sir, for convening this third meeting of the year on Kosovo.

My delegation wishes to express its support for the very relevant points made by the Ambassador of Singapore regarding the need in due course for a comprehensive survey of the situation.

We welcome the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia. We listened very attentively to his message. Cameroon has taken due note of his request for multilateral assistance to establish a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo — in other words, multilateral assistance from the international community to preserve the existence of Kosovo.

We thank Mr. Annabi for his very detailed briefing at the start of the meeting on the latest developments in Kosovo. Cameroon's position on the question of Kosovo was outlined here on 21 January and 25 February. On those occasions, we stated our conviction that certain actions had to be undertaken as a matter of priority if we wished to consolidate the few achievements that had been made towards the revival

of life in Kosovo. Those actions, we felt, were threefold: the strengthening of security, the disarmament of all armed groups and encouraging all minorities to return. We insisted on the point that these actions were top priorities and we still deem them to be so today because they can preserve Kosovo's very existence, which entails preserving its unity.

We welcome the progress mentioned by Mr. Annabi as having been made this month in those priority areas, the most important being the formation of a coalition Government. That was indeed of great importance, and showed that the message sent by the 17 November 2001 elections has finally been heeded. Every time we have addressed the question of Kosovo, we have consistently said that the message is that what is needed to govern Kosovo is inclusion, not exclusion. What is needed is definitely to work together, and a coalition bringing together all segments of society. That is why we call on all parties, including the Kosovo Serb Return Coalition, to participate in the Government by nominating representatives.

We congratulate Mr. Steiner on his efforts, and especially on the wealth of imagination he has drawn on to achieve these results.

We call on all States in the region to respect all territorial agreements. That is essential for the maintenance of peace and security in the region.

We take this opportunity to deplore the violence and crime that continue to cause terror and despair among the people. Here, we welcome the anti-crime campaign put in place by UNMIK regulation 2002/6 of 18 March 2002. In addition to the second weapons amnesty, we welcome the transfer of prisoners to Kosovo.

Those were the points we felt we needed to make at today's open meeting on the question of Kosovo.

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): First, let me extend a warm welcome to Deputy Prime Minister Čović and convey our thanks to Assistant Secretary-General Annabi for — as always — a very helpful, useful and informative briefing. My delegation associates itself with the statement that will be made by Spain on behalf of the European Union later in the debate, so I can be relatively brief.

Like others, we welcome the very positive developments that have taken place since our last briefing on Kosovo. We welcome in particular the election of the President and the Government by the Kosovo Assembly. That was a key step forward both for Kosovo and for regional security. And also like others, I would like to congratulate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Steiner, on having secured that agreement and on his attempts to complete the process by ensuring Serbian participation in the Government. It is, very clearly, strongly in the interests of the Serbian community to play its full part in this endeavour. The provisional self-government administration needs to work in the best interests of all communities, and the best way to ensure that is for the Serbian community to take part. We urge the earliest possible agreement to such participation. I would also say that this is going to be an important benchmark. I very much welcome what Hédi Annabi had to say about the Special Representative's intention to set benchmarks, which is something for which the United Kingdom has argued for quite a long time in successive discussions in the Council.

We also welcome the second important development, to which others have referred: the transfer of Kosovo Albanian prisoners from Serbian prisons to the custody of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). That is an important step in building trust and confidence between the ethnic communities. Here and now, I should like to congratulate Deputy Prime Minister Čović and UNMIK on their roles in delivering this successful outcome. We look forward to the completion of the process of the review of sentences.

The dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, which as soon as possible should include representatives of the new provisional Government, is essential to regional stability. Both sides need to continue to engage positively in order to represent effectively the interests of all communities. Those interests include making the most rapid progress possible on the commitments in the November 2001 Common Document. There is a clear need in particular for close cooperation on the return of internally displaced persons from minority communities. If I may say so in his presence, Deputy Prime Minister Čović has a central role to play in that process, and we look forward to continued and further intensified cooperation between his Coordination Centre and both UNMIK and the new provisional Government.

I make no apology for returning now to the issues of extremism, terrorism and organized crime, which have been a persistent theme in United Kingdom statements to the Council. These are regional problems, and they need regional solutions. We welcome the existing cooperation between law and order ministers and police forces and other actors. But it needs to be intensified to ensure that criminals have nowhere to which to run. We support further investment by UNMIK in its law and order capability, and in particular in those measures designed to combat organized crime. We are eager for the number of Kosovo Police Service officers to be further increased, with the number of international officers being reduced only in parallel with such an increase. We further welcome steps to increase the specialization of UNMIK police officers in areas such as organized crime.

I would agree with Deputy Prime Minister Čović that the two key areas on which we should be focusing are the building of institutions and a multi-ethnic society. I am not sure that I find Ambassador Lavrov's image of "the cancer of Europe" (*supra*) particularly encouraging, but it is self-evidently something which we must all strive desperately to avoid. It goes without saying that if we are to do so we must, as a Council, both recognize the importance of a functioning and effective dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina and send a resounding message of support for the efforts of the Special Representative, who has made such a good start in his new job. I am very pleased to say that I think that the sense of the debate today very strongly reflects both those points.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): I thank Mr. Annabi, and I welcome Deputy Prime Minister Čović to the Council and thank him for his presentation to us.

We too applaud the success of the people of Kosovo and their political leaders on the formation of a new Government. Special Representative Steiner deserves a special word of appreciation for his important role in helping to broker that agreement.

We encourage President Rugova and Prime Minister Rexhepi and Assembly President Thaci to address the many difficult issues that the Government will now have to face. Their initial statements expressing the new Government's commitment to the rule of law, economic reform, enhanced security and, very importantly, to the rights of minorities are encouraging. We need to see results, and we urge them to follow through.

We are deeply pleased to welcome yesterday's transfer from Serbia to Kosovo of Kosovo Albanian detainees. This is very good news. We commend Deputy Prime Minister Čović, Special Representative Steiner and all those who helped make this important step forward possible. It is our hope that this long-awaited action will promote further improvement in the atmosphere for ethnic relations in Kosovo and help foster consensus on other critical issues facing all Kosovars, such as economic reform.

In that regard, we, like others, are disappointed that Kosovo Serbs have so far resisted participation in the Government. It is profoundly in the interests of all Kosovar Serbs to engage. A central challenge for the new Government will be to create an atmosphere of trust and confidence that will reassure Serbs and other minorities, encouraging returns and reconciliation. It seems we all agree that this should be an objective of this process, and a visible Government role for the Serbs is necessary to accomplish this. We strongly support Special Representative Steiner's efforts to encourage constructive engagement by Kosovar Serbs in governing institutions. I want to strongly encourage the Deputy Prime Minister to continue constructive efforts to encourage that participation as well, and to discourage thinking about parallel Serb institutions.

My Government continues to believe that privatization and other economic priorities are now key to accelerating the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. Economic growth and investment are ultimately the best basis for rebuilding a democratic, multi-ethnic Kosovo and for laying the ground for the future.

We welcome the appointment of the new United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Police Commissioner, Mr. Feller, and we support his efforts to strengthen the Kosovo Police Service and to continue the fight against organized crime. I want strongly to second Ambassador Eldon's comments with regard to crime and terrorism.

There is certainly a great deal still to be done, but I have to say that we are encouraged by the progress that Special Representative Steiner and UNMIK have been able to make over the last month. We have seen some important steps forward. The Special

Representative has our full support. We look forward to hearing from him personally in the near future.

Mr. Rivas (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to begin by welcoming Serbia's Deputy Prime Minister Čović and Mr. Annabi, and by thanking them for the information they have given us. That information has provided us with a more comprehensive picture of what is taking place on the ground.

Several important events have taken place in the last month that are of importance for the future of Kosovo and of the region in general. We would like to highlight four such events that we believe are relevant to the discussions of the Security Council.

First, with regard to the formation of the Government of Kosovo, we would like to highlight the agreement reached in recent days between the leaders of the main Kosovo parties and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. That agreement has made it possible to move forward in the formation of a new Government after several months of efforts. We are convinced that the new leaders will be cognizant of the historical responsibilities that rest in their hands with regard to the creation of a multi-ethnic society grounded in democratic principles. We urge them to concentrate their efforts on building new institutions that will guarantee a solid foundation for a future debate on Kosovo's final status.

We are concerned by the reaction of the Serb coalition with regard to its participation in the Government. We hope that they will accept the options put forward by Special Representative Steiner, and that they will not make their participation in the Government contingent upon the creation of a ministry. We ask Deputy Prime Minister Čović to intervene in the negotiations in order to secure Serb participation in the new Government structure.

My second point concerns the exchange of prisoners between Belgrade and Kosovo. We welcome the agreement reached between the Belgrade Government and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) concerning prisoners of war. That agreement led to yesterday's transfer of over 146 Albanian prisoners from Serbia to Kosovo. This is a demonstration of good will and of the cooperative relationship that has been established between UNMIK and the Government in Belgrade, of which Mr. Čović is one of the principal architects.

My third point has to do with the setting up of the joint committee on border affairs. We would like to highlight the establishment of the committee of experts on border issues after the signing of an agreement between UNMIK and the Government of Macedonia. We believe that the work of the committee will make possible the search for adequate solutions to the problems that are now arising between farmers and livestock owners while, at the same time, taking into account the Agreement on the delineation of the border, signed last year by the Governments of Yugoslavia and Macedonia. We believe that the committee's work should be made known in a timely way to the new authorities in Kosovo so as to avoid any misunderstandings and ensure compliance by all parties in any decision taken by the committee.

My fourth point concerns relations between UNMIK, Belgrade and the Government of Kosovo. Colombia has been insisting on the need to establish transparent and effective cooperation between the authorities in Belgrade, the new Government in Kosovo and UNMIK through the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We would like to take the opportunity offered by the presence here of Deputy Prime Minister Čović — who has been an essential contributor to the strengthening of relations between his Government and UNMIK — to emphasize the need for a rapprochement with the authorities in Kosovo. We recognize that there are still several issues on which the two Governments' positions are at odds but we are convinced that with the help of the Special Representative, they will find common ground and ways of addressing the existing differences. It is only through joint efforts between the leaders that we will be able to ensure the creation of a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo in which guarantees exist for all citizens.

Finally, we support the proposal of the Russian Federation for a comprehensive review of the successes and failures of UNMIK over the past three years.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I too wish to convey very warm congratulations to Mr. Nebojša Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia and President of the Yugoslav-Serb Coordination Centre for Kosovo and Metohija. I welcome to our discussion today the participation of an eminent Yugoslav political leader responsible for Kosovar questions.

I would also like to thank Mr. Hédi Annabi for his briefing, which highlighted the successes achieved by the United Nations in Kosovo since his last briefing, on 25 February. Those successes are particularly important, as they were achieved in a short span of time.

France of course supports the detailed statement to be made in due course by the Permanent Representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union. In my national capacity, I should now like to take up some issues to which France attaches particular importance.

The election of Mr. Ibrahim Rugova to the presidency of Kosovo and the creation of a coalition Government under the leadership of Mr. Bajram Rexhepi are the most significant developments of recent weeks. I congratulate Mr. Rugova and Mr. Rexhepi on their election. It is also fitting to welcome the personal contribution of Mr. Michael Steiner to this success.

The political agreement concluded under the aegis of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General will render viable the Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government. The elected leaders of the Povratak coalition must play their part in the Self-Government, in which the Constitutional Framework has given them a full role to play — as well as in the Kosovo Assembly, in which Povratak is an important political force. They have that responsibility to their electorate, but also to Kosovo as a whole, which must be fully developed within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999) and the Constitutional Framework. We support the actions by the Special Representative to break the current deadlock.

A considerable amount of work awaits the Government of Kosovo. The daily administration of Kosovo is now its responsibility. It must therefore become involved in the details and tasks of management, without delay. The welfare of the entire population depends on the quality of its judgement and the soundness of its decisions. The stakes justify its full shouldering of the responsibilities which fall to it under the Constitutional Framework.

It is important that, in exercising its functions, the Government of Kosovo be guided by concern for the common interest. Public activities must be carried out to benefit all residents, including minorities. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General will ensure this in implementing the provisions of the Constitutional Framework and of resolution 1244 (1999).

Everything possible should be done to improve the lot of the members of Kosovo's minority communities. Economic development and strengthening security will be decisive in bringing down the emigration rate, which is too high.

In parallel, because of its symbolic importance and its human implications, the issue of returns should continue to receive attention. We expect the Kosovar leaders of Albanian origin, who are cooperating actively with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) at all levels, including the local level, to ensure that the projects under way are completed. The mobilization of everyone around this cause is essential. We welcome the appeal launched by Mr. Rexhepi in Kamenica to free the province from intolerance and to integrate the minorities living in enclaves. This path should be pursued so as to ensure tangible results.

More generally, it is important that the agreement concluded on 5 November between Mr. Haekkerup and Mr. Čović be implemented fully. We already see the results with the transfer of the last Albanian prisoners from Serbia to Kosovo. The settlement of this matter is a definite success that illustrates the usefulness of close and confident cooperation between UNMIK, the elected Kosovar representatives and the competent Yugoslav authorities on practical matters of common interest. We look forward to Mr. Čović's continued involvement in the implementation of the agreement of 5 November by way of dialogue with UNMIK and soon, we hope, with the institutions of the Provisional Self-Government.

The agreement concluded in Belgrade on 14 March under the aegis of Mr. Javier Solana with regard to relations between Serbia and Montenegro will help strengthen stability in South-East Europe and draw that region closer to Europe. We welcome the political courage of the signatories, which is exemplary. The agreement does not change the identity or the international personality of the State. Therefore, the international obligations and laws relevant to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in particular resolution 1244 (1999), will continue to apply to the common State of Serbia and Montenegro.

Ms. Lajous (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Before I begin, I should like to join all the Council members who have thanked Mr. Hédi Annabi, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for the information he has presented to us. Most especially, I should like to express my appreciation for the comments of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Nebojša Čović, who has left us with a very clear message: time is short, and we must carry forward two urgent tasks — building the area's institutions and constructing a multi-ethnic society.

At the beginning of this month, the Kosovo Assembly ratified the agreement reached by the main parties of the province to establish a Provisional Self-Government headed by President Ibrahim Rugova and Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi. Mexico welcomes this achievement, because it will help facilitate the transfer of power from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to the Provisional Institutions, in conformity with resolution 1244 (1999). This will certainly contribute to stabilizing the region. A very delicate phase will also begin — that of ensuring, to the greatest extent possible, that the Government's responsibilities are transferred to the local authorities within the existing Constitutional Framework. We must remember that we have a long path ahead of us, but hopefully we will reach the end soon.

The province continues to be one of the most backward areas in Europe in economic terms, and many things must still be done to establish fully the rule of law in order to combat organized crime more effectively and promote economic growth. This will require the political will and maturity of all actors involved. A harmonious Kosovo implies that trust will prevail among all residents of the province and requires that the rancorous memories of the past be left behind. This is a prerequisite to the full implementation of the concepts of democracy and respect for human rights. The trust that can be developed among all of the social groups, without external exclusion or intrusion, will be the basis for a prosperous Kosovo strengthened by unity.

The return to their homes of internally displaced persons and refugees will show that progress is being made on this path. We have taken note of UNMIK's efforts to bring back to the province the Albanians who were held in Serb prisons and of measures taken to liberate persons whose sentences could be considered invalid.

The international community is observing with interest the activities of UNMIK and of the various United Nations organs and regional security organizations that have provided an example of strategic association to build a durable peace in Kosovo. Mexico encourages UNMIK and all international agencies that work in the province to continue their altruistic and fruitful work for international peace and security.

We welcome the proposal made by several delegations that Mr. Steiner should address the Council during the month of April and tell us about the progress achieved, particularly as regards border issues with Macedonia.

Mexico takes note of the document on the first steps towards the redefinition of relations between Serbia and Montenegro, signed on 14 March in Belgrade, in particular as it relates to resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, like my colleagues who spoke before me, I should like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Hédi Annabi for his briefing.

The Chinese delegation welcomes the presence of Mr. Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of the Yugoslav constituent Republic of Serbia, and we thank him for his important statement. We endorse his views.

We believe that the top priorities in Kosovo at present are, first, institution-building, and secondly, the building of a genuinely multi-ethnic society.

In his statement, Deputy Prime Minister Čović noted that all prisoners of Albanian origin have been transferred from Serbia to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). This will facilitate national reconciliation and mutual trust. We deeply appreciate the efforts made by Mr. Čović in this regard.

The overall situation in Kosovo has been stable recently. Progress is being made with respect to the political process and to economic development. Of note is the fact that the various parties in Kosovo have reached an agreement on a coalition Government. We welcome this progress. However, we cannot overlook

the fact that transboundary organized crime and arms trafficking remain serious concerns.

There has been no notable improvement in the security situation in minority areas, and the return of ethnic minorities is occurring at a slow pace. We hope that UNMIK will strengthen its cooperation with Belgrade to make further efforts to address the problems I mentioned earlier.

We hope also that the Kosovo coalition Government, with the help of UNMIK, will implement strictly resolution 1244 (1999), so as to establish a harmonious and multi-ethnic society in Kosovo.

The Chinese delegation welcomes the efforts made in Skopje, with the facilitation of Mr. Steiner, to establish a joint expert committee to address border problems. We hope that this committee will play an active role in helping both sides implement resolution 1244 (1999). On the basis of the border demarcation agreement signed by the Government of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, it will be possible effectively to address the practical border issues between Pristina and Skopje, so as to ensure normal living conditions for people on the ground.

We would note also that, not long ago, remarks were made that are harmful to peaceful coexistence among the countries of the region and that are detrimental to the stability of Kosovo and of the region as a whole. This has drawn the attention of the international community. We hope that such events will not be repeated.

In conclusion, we hope that the parties concerned will effectively implement resolution 1244 (1999) and continue to work towards peace, stability and economic development in the region of the Balkans.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Norway.

Norway appreciates the participation here today of Deputy Prime Minister Čović as a key actor in our work on Kosovo and as a prominent representative of the democratic leadership in Belgrade, with which my country has excellent relations.

Like others, we welcome the election of a President and a provisional Government in Kosovo as a major step in the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). For the Kosovo structures to function effectively, cooperation is needed involving elected representatives, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and Belgrade.

Norway encourages dialogue between the Return Coalition, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Steiner and Kosovo leaders to ensure full Kosovo Serb participation in the provisional Government structures. The involvement of Belgrade is important, and we encourage Mr. Čović to work with constructive Kosovo Serb leaders to achieve solutions that will be in the interests of all Kosovo Serbs.

Norway welcomes the active and constructive role of Belgrade in recent months, which was demonstrated again yesterday by the release of Kosovar Albanian detainees from Serbian prisons.

Cooperation between UNMIK and the Yugoslav authorities can, however, be further developed. The High-Ranking Working Group should be used as a mechanism for constructive dialogue between democratically elected leaders in Pristina and Belgrade.

The overall decline in violent crime and murder in Kosovo over the last year gives grounds for optimism, but not for complacency. The security situation for ethnic minorities continues to be of concern. The strengthening of law and order in Kosovo is necessary. This is not only a minority issue but a civic issue affecting all segments of Kosovo's population.

Organized crime and illegal trafficking are of great concern, not only for Kosovo but for the region and Europe at large. Norway supports the initiative by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Steiner to confer greater powers on the UNMIK police to combat organized crime in Kosovo. We also support the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's veterans' amnesty programme and urge Kosovo leaders to work with UNMIK for its success.

The return of internally displaced persons remains an important challenge. Greater efforts must be made to create conditions for sustainable return. This will be an important measure of the Kosovo leaders' commitment to safeguarding the human rights of all inhabitants in Kosovo. International engagement will also continue to be required in order to facilitate minority returns.

Norway emphasizes that the newly elected provisional Government of Kosovo must respect the

border demarcation agreement of 23 February 2001. Elected representatives in the Kosovo Assembly, as well as provisional Government authorities, must strictly abide by Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the Constitutional Framework.

Norway welcomes the agreement reached between Montenegro and Serbia on a constitutional arrangement between the two Republics. The agreement contributes to regional stability and shows that political negotiations can result in mutually acceptable arrangements. It also contributes to a more stable environment for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) in Kosovo.

Through the Secretariat, I should like to convey to Mr. Steiner Norway's full support for his efforts, and we look forward to seeing him here in the Council.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Spain. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Malta, Cyprus, Turkey, Iceland and Liechtenstein align themselves with this statement.

We welcome the participation of Mr. Nebojša Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of the Yugoslav Constituent Republic of Serbia, in today's meeting of the Council.

The European Union welcomes the election by the Kosovo Assembly of the President of Kosovo, Mr. Ibrahim Rugova, and the establishment of a Government, which mark an important step forward in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). The Union believes that these newly established institutions will fully take on the functions assigned to them by the Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government. We congratulate Special Representative Steiner for his success in brokering an agreement on the formation of the Government, and support his intention to hold municipal elections on 21 September.

We look forward to a resolution of the question of the participation of the Povratak Coalition in the Government. Povratak has a crucial role to play in shaping Kosovo's new institutions.

The European Union supports the intention of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to tackle the challenges of laying the foundation for economic development; establishing a political culture based on the rule of law, including the fight against organized crime and violence; and building a fair and just society with dignity for all. The European Union calls on all the parties to cooperate fully with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and KFOR in pursuing those objectives.

The fight against organized crime and violence continues to be of the utmost importance to the Union. Freedom from fear is a fundamental requirement if democracy is to take root in Kosovo. We support all steps aimed at the eradication of organized crime and violence and welcome the recently adopted regulation to step up the investigation of criminal activities. We also look forward to forthcoming regulations to tackle the economic crime that is hindering progress in the establishment of a functioning economy.

The European Union continues to support the full implementation of the Common Document for cooperation between UNMIK and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, signed last November. We hope that there will be significant progress in all areas within that framework. We welcome the announcement that all Kosovo Albanians detained in the Republic of Serbia have been returned to Kosovo. That does, indeed, constitute a good example of the efficacy of such cooperation.

We also expect cooperation between the elected representatives of the people of Kosovo, UNMIK and Belgrade to be instrumental in creating the conditions for the security and freedom of movement of all communities that are necessary to ensure an increase in the return of displaced Serbs to Kosovo.

The Union reiterates the need for full respect of the border Agreement between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, signed in February 2001. It welcomes the decision of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Steiner, and the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to set up a joint committee to deal with practical problems on the ground that might arise as a result of its

implementation. We look forward to further measures to enhance police cooperation between UNMIK and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the fight against organized crime.

We have reiterated that the main objective for the people of Kosovo is integration into the European Union. But if it is to have a European future, it must be a Kosovo with a multi-ethnic, democratic society, based on the rule of law, and with dignity and freedom of movement for all communities. We encourage the newly established provisional institutions and the community leaders to do their utmost to achieve these goals, with the assistance of UNMIK, the European Union and the international community at large.

The European Union remains committed to providing economic and political support to Kosovo. We are by far the biggest contributor to the reconstruction effort in the province, where we are providing assistance in such areas as economic, fiscal and monetary policy and management, as well as in the building of local capacity.

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the progress made in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the implementation of the Framework Agreement, as well as the success of the donors' meeting, organized earlier in the month in Brussels by the European Commission and the World Bank.

The European Union firmly believes that concentrating the energies of the region on economic development, institutional reform and European integration is the best way to bring about stability and overcome conflict.

I would like to conclude by saying that we remain committed to continuing our economic assistance within the stabilization and association process, in conformity with the existing policy of conditionality, based on the achievement of European standards.

The President: I now invite Deputy Prime Minister Čović to make some additional comments.

Mr. Čović (Yugoslavia) (*spoke in Serbian. English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting today. I am very pleased that a question was asked — perhaps indirectly — today about the participation of the Povratak Coalition in the Government of Kosovo. Of course we are aware that the decision will be up to the deputies of the Povratak Coalition. They want to be real partners; they are not interested in mere window dressing. The way in which the issue of their participation was presented to the deputies of Povratak confused them; they said that they had not been consulted and had not come to an agreement in this regard.

As the Council knows, an offer was not even made to them to sign the coalition agreement on the Government of Kosovo. However, Mr. Steiner has had several talks with the deputies of Povratak and they feel that it will be necessary for them to consult further. They also believe that their unity must be preserved and that attempts should not be made to divide them. There have been some efforts to create different factions within the Coalition, in the belief that that would be the quickest way to achieve a result.

The Povratak deputies were informed about the agreement made with the Albanian leaders only after it had been signed. They were informed about the ministerial positions in the Government only after all the ministerial positions had been filled. We must try to understand their point of view, because the Serbs in Kosovo have had a very different experience from that of the Serbs who left Kosovo, and they have different opinions. I want to be very clear that neither Belgrade nor I have ever planned to block the participation of the Serbian deputies in the Government of Kosovo. Their participation is blocked by the situation in Kosovo.

It is important to recall that there are three times as many Kosovo Serbs in Serbia and Montenegro — internally displaced persons and refugees — than in Kosovo itself. I say this in support of my statement that they hold different views than those who remained in Kosovo.

In order to help the Serbs to survive in Kosovo within a truly multi-ethnic society, it is absolutely essential that we make substantive progress on returns. I have heard and fully recognize the arguments made by Assistant Secretary-General Annabi and am prepared, upon my return to Belgrade, to consult with the representatives of Povratak in order to have them further clarify their position. The final decision, however, will be up to them.

Nevertheless, given their genuine concerns, I note that it will be necessary in exchange to provide them with specific assurances that all will be done to

improve the process of the return of Serbs and non-Albanians to their homes in Kosovo. We must not allow security issues to dominate the return process or to be used to discourage potential returnees. The Belgrade authorities are fully prepared to provide the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and KFOR with all the assistance necessary to resolve these issues and to improve the return process.

Finally, the representatives of Povratak are grateful for the offered position of Minister of Agriculture. However, they asked me to convey their message to the Council that this portfolio has no importance whatsoever to the future and survival of the Serbs in Kosovo. I therefore request the Council's assistance and support in doing our very best, jointly, to encourage them to enter the Kosovo Government. We cannot succeed in this unless we cooperate very closely in this regard. We are at the Council's disposal and I wish to assure members that we will do our utmost, without exerting undue pressure.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.